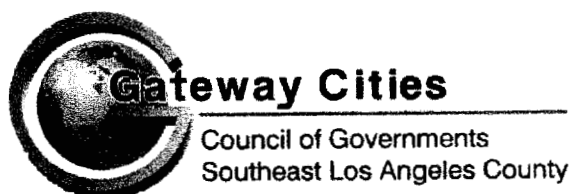
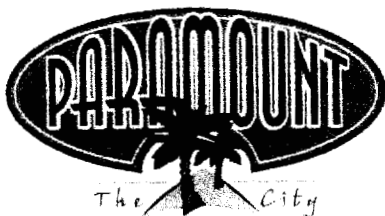


**Livable
Places
Profile**

Paramount

A business-friendly city,
Paramount stimulates economic
development through sustained revitalization.

September 1999

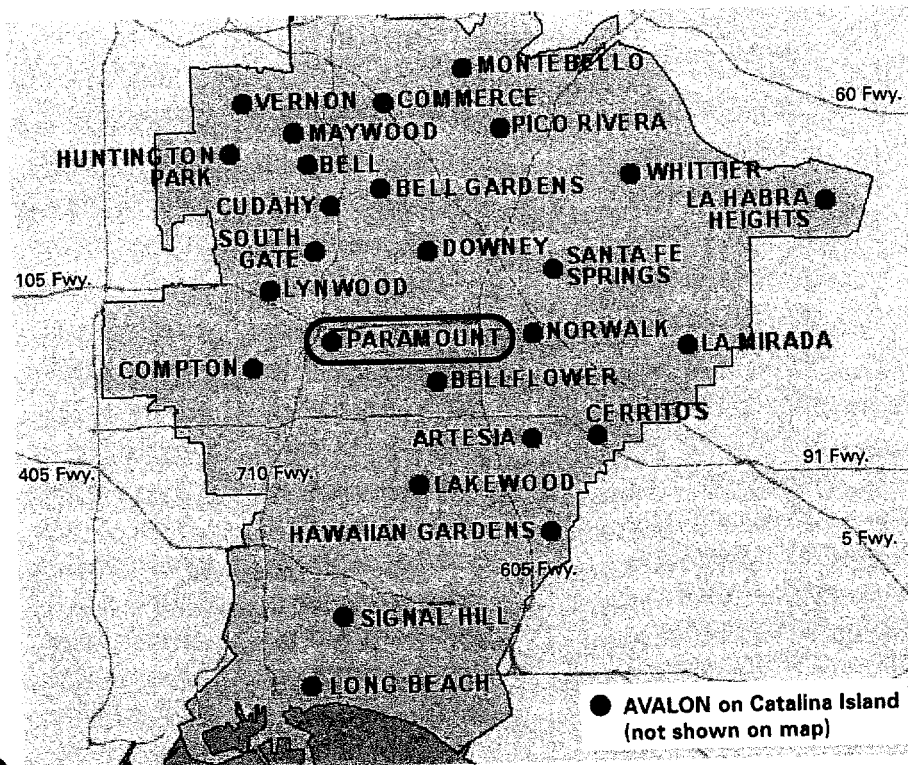


Livability Showcase

The Gateway Cities Council of Governments (COG), in partnership with the Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG), is sponsoring three livable community profiles. Each profile highlights how a member city's exemplary efforts at industrial, commercial, or residential development and redevelopment have paid-off to transform its assets into a more sustainable place. These profiles provide an opportunity for member cities to learn about and benefit from each other's hard earned successes in enhancing the economic vitality of their community while retaining their unique characteristics and improving the quality of life for their residents.

- **Population: 56,000**
 - **African-American: 10%**
 - **Asian: 5%**
 - **Hispanic: 61%**
 - **White/Anglo: 24%**
- **Employment: 13,667**
- **Median Household Income: \$32,844**
- **Year Incorporated: 1957**
- **Area: 4.9 square miles**

This profile focuses on the success of the City of Paramount with an extraordinary commercial development and rehabilitation program. By championing the strategy of public-private partnerships, Paramount has revitalized the look and feel of major arterial streets, stimulated owners to improve their properties, and fostered positive relationships with businesses and constituents.



About the Gateway Cities Subregion

Twenty-seven cities and the unincorporated areas of Los Angeles County comprise the 220 square mile Gateway Cities subregion. The Gateway Cities is the traditional center of Southern California's industrial core, and one of the most densely populated areas of the region. By the year 2000, Gateway Cities will exceed two million residents and 750,000 jobs. With an excellent transportation infrastructure and the world's largest ports complex nearby, the Gateway Cities is at the hub of the largest and richest domestic market in North America.

*"Paramount is the story of unification and incorporation...
a city that raised itself after severe economic challenges
to win the coveted All-America City Award..."*

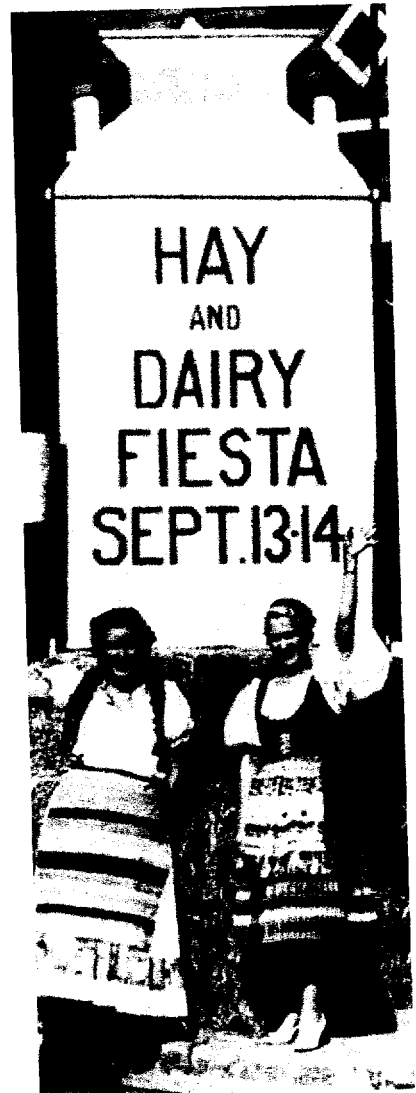
Brief History: Paramount was formed in 1957 when two competitive communities—Clearwater and Hynes—finally joined. The original Clearwater community was named for the free-flowing artesian wells that fed a natural lake around which the original townsite was developed. Eventually the lake became the Radium Drive-In Theater, today home to the Swap Meet. Clearwater South, which later became Hynes, started immediately after the townsite was founded.

In 1890, the Los Angeles Terminal Railway, later the Union Pacific, connected to Clearwater, and soon H. R. Epperson developed the first creamery business. Tons of dairy products shipped daily and expanded rail facilities were developed. The Hynes station was opened, named after the railway manager and founder of the Community Ice Co. that provided ice to refrigerator cars for vegetables shipped to East Coast markets. The creamery led to sustained prosperity and dairymen of Portuguese and Dutch descent settled in the area.

With superior soil conditions, the hay business also flourished, and by 1932 Clearwater was the largest hay receiving point in California--local prices were a world standard.

In 1948, after years of dispute, the U.S. Postal Service made Hynes the main post office but changed its name to Paramount. When Long Beach and Bellflower threatened annexation the City incorporated in 1957.

Reflecting a changing economy, Paramount suffered severe economic decline during the late 1960's. A well publicized 1982 Rand Corporation study depicted Paramount as a national symbol of urban decline. But within a few years Paramount turned around to win the prestigious 1988 All-America City award. Key redevelopment projects helped make the difference including the Town Center East and West, the senior citizens complex, consolidation of multiple city water companies, and other business center developments.



Welcome to the Hay and Dairy
Fiesta of 1935.



The main shopping center on Ocean Boulevard, later Paramount Boulevard, about 1924.

Model of Commercial Development: City Beautification

The City of Paramount has developed an aggressive and extraordinarily successful program to rehabilitate and revitalize commercial and industrial properties on major thoroughfares throughout the City. For the last ten years, the City has pioneered a program that rehabilitates four to six projects annually, spending about \$200,000 a year on improvements. In addition, the City has implemented streetscape and other enhancements to the public realm, such as constructing entrance fountains at key gateway intersections.

Leadership: The program is spearheaded by the Community and Economic Development Department. Their roles and responsibilities include identifying potential projects, initiating the implementation process, preparing design concepts, and negotiating agreements and assisting property owners through the building permit and construction processes. The City Staff work close-

ly with each owner through an interactive design process to visualize concepts and then evolve, rather than dictate, a win-win solution to meet their unique needs and to solve their particular problems.

Program Elements: Elements of the rehabilitation program include façade enhancements and general property improvements.

Façade enhancements can range from clean-up and painting, to replacement of door and window frames, to redesign and replacement of entire façades. Façade enhancements are coordinated with seismic upgrades, if needed. Changes in roof design are made to fit the façade enhancements.

Property improvements include new signage and setback enhancements. New signage includes façade signs and freestanding monument signs, among others. Setback enhancements include landscape and construction of privacy walls. The City also assists property owners reorganize the way they use their land. This can include, for example, relocating trash and outdoor storage from the front to the back, out of view from City streets. The City also works with utility companies to relocate or underground electrical and telephone lines.

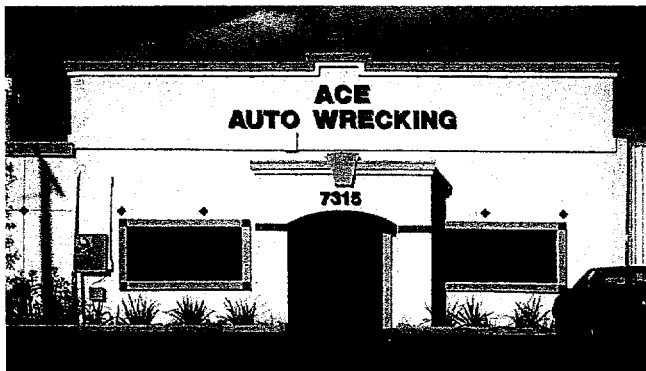
To assure long term viability of the public investment in revitalizing a private business, the City enters into a covenant with the property owner to ensure proper maintenance.

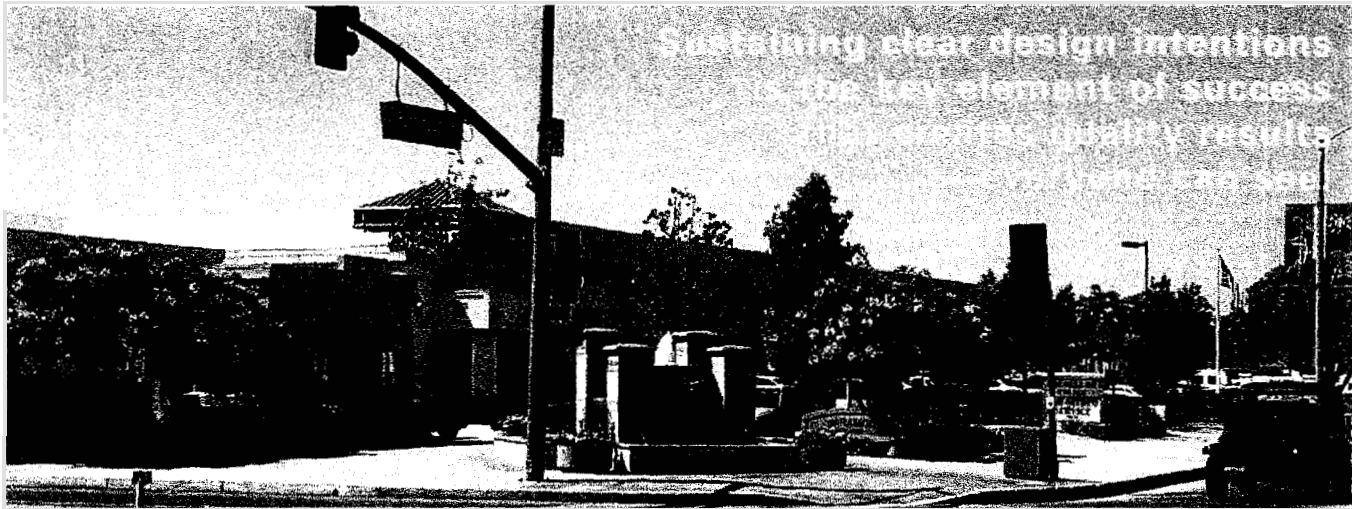
Most owners welcome the opportunity to make changes to their buildings and property—many have been thinking for years about improvements but have either postponed them or could not afford them. With the City's 75% financial contribution, owners are motivated to act. In fact, the program is so popular and its reputation so good that owners ask the City to give them priority on the project implementation list.

The Human Touch: The City's ability to sustain this program is the result of Staff's commitment to work closely with the owners. This includes the Staff's well-honed negotiating skills; an understanding of each owner's unique condi-



Revitalized businesses stimulate community interest to buy locally, thereby sustaining long-term viability. Above, Ace Auto Wrecking facade before revitalization.





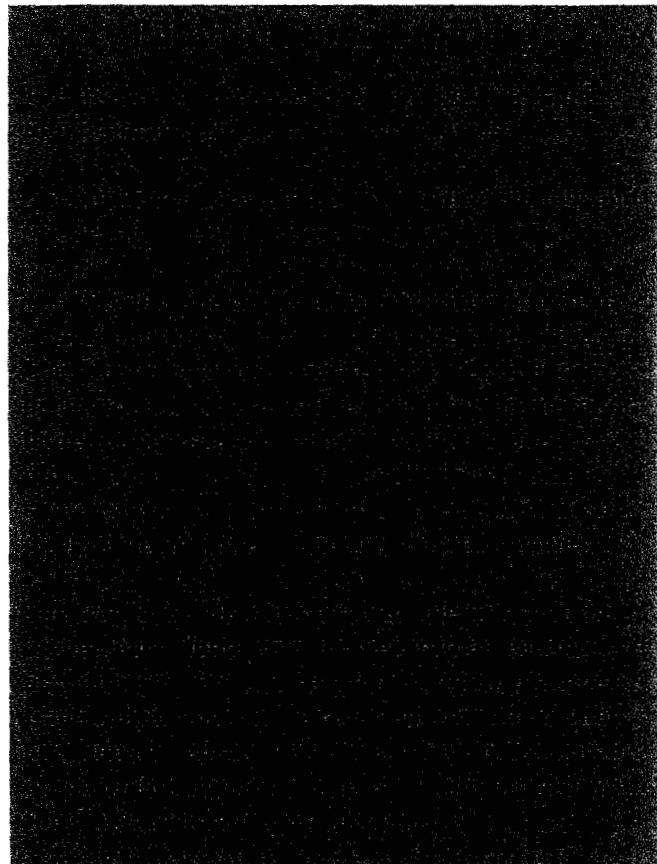
Sustaining clear design intentions
is the key element of success
that creates quality results
everyone can see.

Fountains and public plazas developed at the center of town contribute to a cultured and enjoyable public realm stimulating civic pride.

tions, needs, abilities, concerns, business, and ideas; educating owners and demystifying the implementation process including the allocation of public funds, the design process, the permit approval process, and the construction process.

The most important aspect of working closely with owners is Staff's commitment to stick with and not compromise design principles. Sustaining clear design intentions is the key element of success that creates quality results everyone can see. This commitment to good design raises the bar for the City as a whole by challenging owners to achieve a high level of quality.

Consistently maintaining this approach has earned the Staff credibility and the respect of people across the City. Owners know they can rely on the City because of its successful track record. Nevertheless, no two rehabilitation projects have the same characteristics so Staff must remain flexible, listen and learn, and skillfully cultivate good design.



Adult school before facade revitalization.



Adult school after facade revitalization.

Public Fountains

Paramount has structured many types of public-private partnerships to build fountains or decorative entry structures at the key locations. The fountains and structures provide strong visual character, define a sense of arrival, and symbolize the City's commitment to a cultured public realm.

A fountain now stands at the corner of Lakewood and Century Boulevards at the Wal-Mart shopping center. While the City designed-fountain was a condition of approval, the developer embraced the idea because it sends customer's a message of welcome and respect.

Another fountain serves as an entry structure called the Welcome Wall, at Downey Avenue and 70th Street. This fountain, located on a school district bus maintenance yard easement, was developed through interagency cooperation. City and district staff worked together to design the fountain and walls that screen buses.

Another fountain is on the west side of town at the southeast corner of Orange Avenue and Paramount Boulevard. When the property owner remodelled and expanded an existing commercial center, and the City took the opportunity to secure an easement to allow for the construction of a fountain and small public plaza.



Gateway fountain, Wal-Mart.



Downtown fountain.



Welcome Wall fountain.

A Sampler of Public

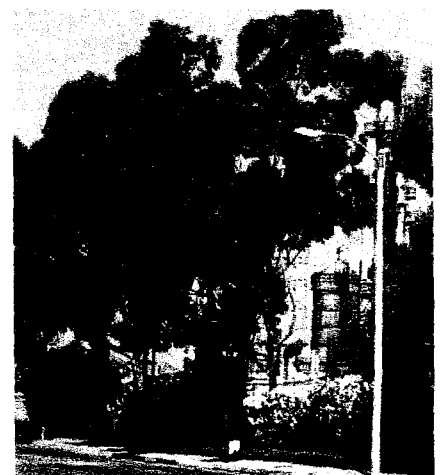
Over the last decade, the City has implemented a range of streetscape improvements that make the public spaces of the City enjoyable and friendly places to be.

Screening Southern California Edison Power Lines



The landscape setback with trees, fence, and grass screen views of SCE power lines from the street.

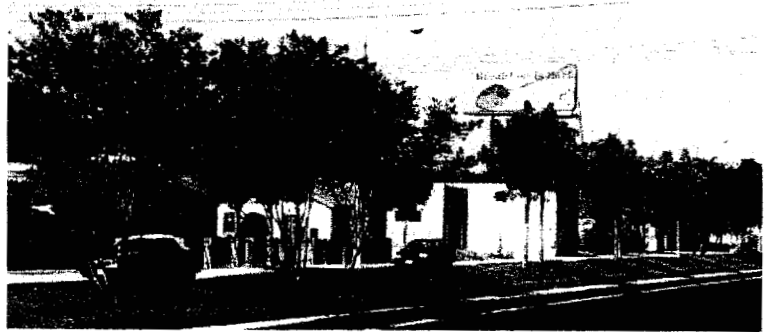
The City has evolved a successful working relationship with SCE to implement landscape setback improvements screening large and obtrusive high-power lines that criss-cross the City. Because requirements prohibit buildings in these rights-of-way, they tend to be wide and unsightly expanses. At the locations where these rights-of-way intersect city streets, Paramount has implemented a landscape improvement program which includes unique combinations of walls and fences, large canopy trees, shrubs, and ground cover.



Trees with large canopies screen industrial uses from street view.

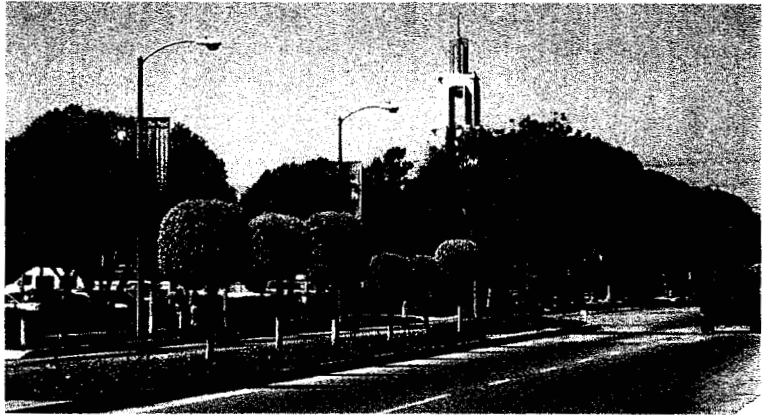


Above: Downey Street offers shade through a dense foliage and planting pattern.



Above right: Alondra Boulevard offers seasonal color in the median.

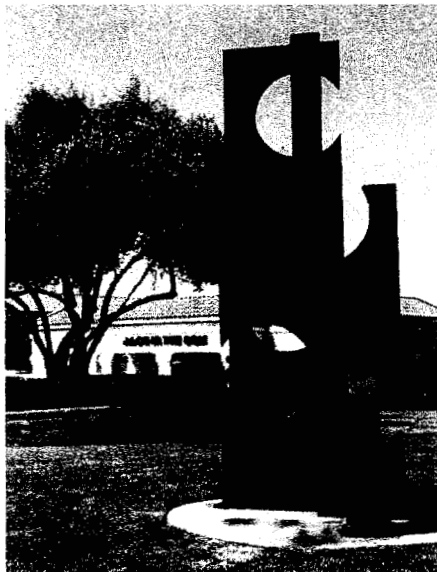
Right: Well trimmed trees on Paramount Boulevard protect driver views near busy intersections.



Realm *Improvements*

Rights-of-Way

Paramount is committed to improving streets with landscape medians and setbacks in front of commercial, industrial, and residential uses. A variety of tree, shrub, and ground cover types are used. Trees are closely spaced and selected to suit their purpose: for example, near intersections they are shaped so as not to impinge on driver sight lines, while in residential areas large canopies provide shade and screen views.

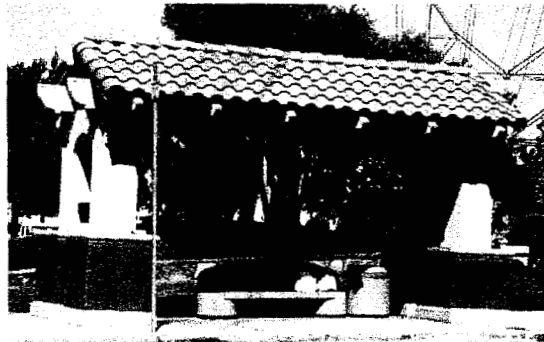


Public Space and Urban Design Improvements

Art in public spaces, flower beds, and stylistic bus stops enhancing the transit-rider experience all contribute to a cultured and enjoyable public realm that has identity and character which stimulates civic pride. The City features over 20 major outdoor art pieces.

Above: Public art and landscape design enhance major street intersections.

Right: Stylistic bus shelter provides all-season protection to transit-riders.



Far Right: Seasonal flowers and art enhance the building design.



Residential White-Picket Fence Program

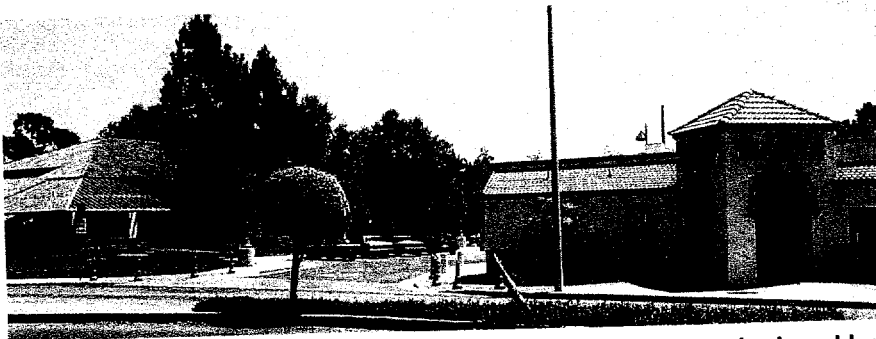
Paramount has established a White Picket Fence Program to improve the look and safety of homes throughout the City. The program began when the Public Works Department, needing to use some residential land to improve an underground water line, offered in exchange to install a white picket fence. The fence improved the residence so much that neighbors began asking how they could get one. The City Council responded enthusiastically by creating a city-wide program. Staff implements the program home by home, neighborhood by neighborhood, through direct contact with homeowners and through presentations at community and public safety meetings. The white picket fences greatly improve the look of the neighborhood, particularly when they replace chain link fences. In addition, the fences provide a safety measure for homes with children.



White picket fences enhance the look and safety of homes and neighborhoods.

A Sampler of **Private**

Over the last decade, the City has successfully implemented over 60 projects across a range of businesses, land uses, owners, site conditions, and funding mechanisms.



The parking lot between Spane Park and El Compa Restaurant is shared by both uses as part of a win-win solution championed by the City.

El Compa Restaurant at Spane Park

This unique public-private partnership led to shared benefits for both El Compa and the City. El Compa, a well known restaurant, was in need of repair and had a blighted parcel next to Spane Park originally intended for a parking lot. Without sufficient funds, the restaurant remained dilapidated and the parking lot unbuilt. El Compa was also cited by the City for an illegal addition.

To proactively remedy the citation, the City championed a win-win solution. With the City's technical assistance, El Compa applied for, and received, a U.S. Small Business Administration loan to expand the restaurant. At the same time, the City agreed to improve the vacant parcel as a parking lot to serve the needs of both restaurant and park users.



Detail view of facade and landscape improvements.

Revitalized
Pacific Bell
facade.



Realm *Improvements*

Pacific Bell Building

Pacific Bell has technical services buildings located throughout Southern California. They are usually large, windowless buildings constructed in the 1950's and 60's and haven't seen much improvement since their original construction. With one of these buildings in Paramount, the City approached Pacific Bell with a grant to build a new fence and install landscape improvements around the parking lot. While Pacific Bell was initially reluctant to participate, they enthusiastically embraced the concept after understanding the City's intentions and commitment. Pacific Bell took the initiative not only to improve the parking lot, but also completed a full renovation of the building's façades.



Revitalized Bike Shop facade.

Bicycle Shop

The Paramount Bike Shop has a long and well-respected history in town and is known to everyone. The building, originally constructed in the 1940's, had never been renovated and was in need of substantial improvements. The owner approached the City about funding opportunities and the City Staff enthusiastically welcomed the chance to improve this valued local landmark. The façade and roof were completely redone, new signage installed, and a new pedestrian-oriented landscape setback developed.



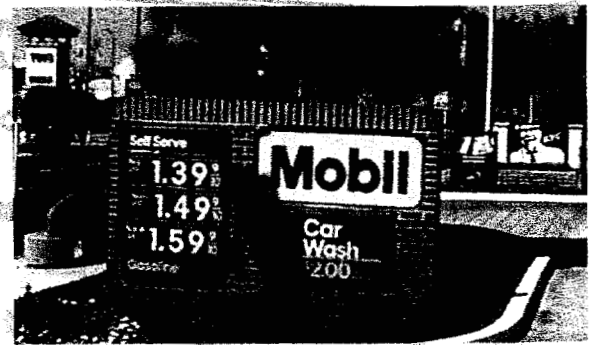
Pedestrian scaled landscape design improves the sidewalk.

Design Guidelines

The City begins all improvement projects using a standard approach, and then varies the design process and features to address each one's unique needs and conditions. The City has two major policy documents guiding their efforts: the Central Business District Architectural Guidelines and Signage Guidelines. Design features include the following:

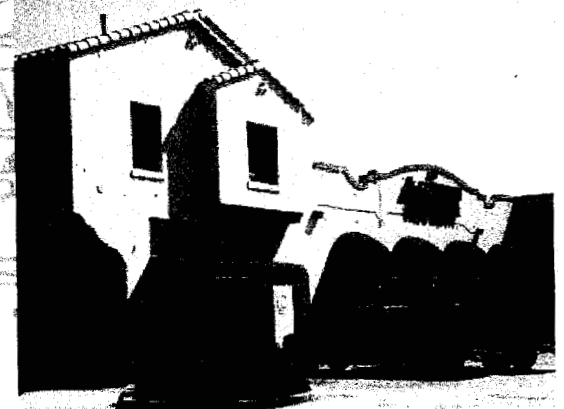
- New sectional roll-up doors
- A general "Spanish Mediterranean" architectural style
- Ample landscape including trees, shrubs, and ground cover
- Replacement of chain link fences with solid walls and/or wrought iron fences
- Color stamped concrete sidewalks & driveways
- Alarm systems rather than bars or grates

A variety of sign types are used throughout the City including monument signs, pylon signs, pole signs, wall signs, and plaque signs, among others.



Architectural guidelines are a key policy document that should be in place to provide city staff with a consistent framework for implementation. Guidelines send a clear message to the market that the city has an interest in protecting private sector investments by maintaining the same high standards for everyone. Staff must, however, have the flexibility to interpret the guidelines to address the individual needs and concerns of business owners.

Architectural guidelines address a variety of conditions including site access, parking, setbacks, landscape, views, trash enclosures, street furniture, paving, colors, roof forms, massing, scale, proportion, lighting, and security.



Lessons Learned

✓ **Coordinated and Targeted Investment:**

Coordinated and targeted public and private investments stimulate commercial revitalization and create the conditions—an attractive city that looks safe and clean, and has pride of ownership—that encourage residents to buy locally. When residents buy locally they support the long-term economic sustainability of the city, which is the hallmark of a livable community. If spent wisely, targeted public "seed money" can leverage significant private investments.

✓ **Incremental Progress is Critical to Long Term Improvements:** Each small, incremental decision and investment adds up to more than the sum of the parts, and can have significant and enduring effects.

✓ **Staff Initiative and Creativity plus City Council Support Are Keys to Success:** City staff initiative and creativity can be the decisive factor in the success of programs and policies to improve a city.

✓ **Keep it Simple:** Simple and modest investments such as those funded with community development block grant funds, or with redevelop-

ment funds, can leverage significant incremental private sector investments.

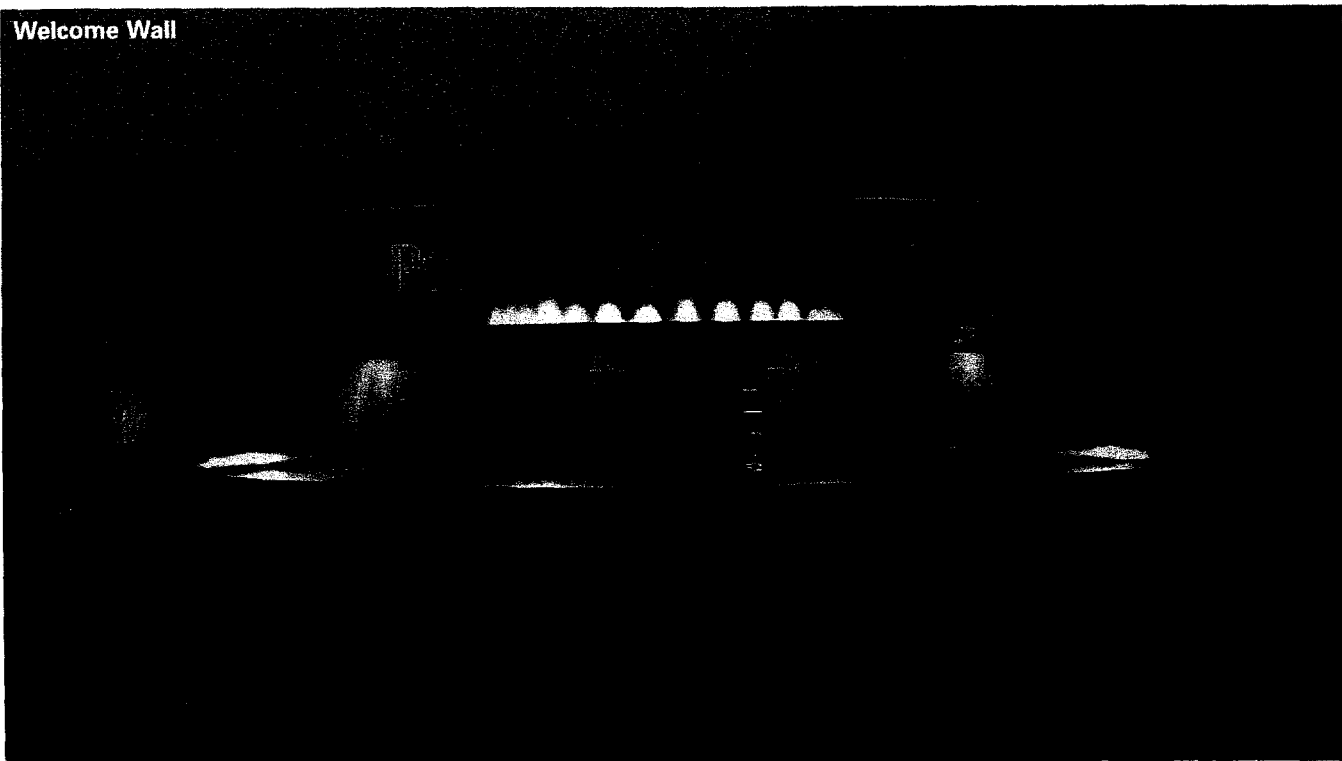
✓ **Political Will and Commitment to Solutions:** Political will and commitment on the part of both elected officials and staff is necessary to overcome complex problems.

✓ **Identify, Define and Face Problems:** Communities which identify, define, and face problems, as the City of Paramount did following the 1982 Rand Study, have a better chance of success at developing creative solutions.

✓ **Attention to Detail and an Insistence on Quality Breeds Success:** By continued commitment, care, and attention to details, city staff gains a reputation for reliability, service, and quality results that leads other business owners to participate in improvement programs.

✓ **Tailored Solutions Can Yield Consistent Results:** The negotiating skills of staff, including insistence on achieving citywide objectives while remaining flexible to address the individual concerns of business owners is key.

Welcome Wall



Credits

City of Paramount

Gene Daniels, Mayor
Manuel Guillen, Vice Mayor
Henry Harkema, Councilmember
Peggy Lemons, Councilmember
Diane J. Martinez, Councilmember
Patrick West, City Manager
John Carver, Manager, Community & Economic
Development Department

Gateway Cities Council of Governments

Richard Powers, Executive Director

Southern California Assoc. of Governments

President: Supervisor Zev Yaroslavsky, Los Angeles
First Vice President: Council member Ron Bates,
City of Los Alamitos
Second Vice President: Supervisor Kathy Davis, San
Bernardino County
Immediate Past President: Mayor Bob Bartlett, City
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- Central Business District Signage Guidelines

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